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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC, EUR/PPD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: REBEL A1-PLUS MEDIA OUTLET MAY BE FORCED OUT OF  
BUSINESS

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) Independent media outlet A1-Plus is being forced to vacate its offices, which may result in the shut-down of its website and newspaper. The Ministry of Territorial Administration has offered a new set of offices to the news outlet, whose television station was forced off the air in 2002, but A1-Plus Director Mesrop Movsesian told us that the company cannot move into the offices until a government agency provides the documents necessary for the building management to sign a contract. While Movsesian believes that the company's recent problems are economically motivated, many observers see this as the latest in a series of political moves against the independent media outlet.  
End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Independent media outlet A1-Plus is being forced to vacate its offices, which may result in the shut-down of its website and newspaper. The National Academy of Sciences is evicting the news outlet, whose television station was forced off the air in 2002 by the National Committee on TV and Radio, ostensibly in order to sell the building. In March 2006, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, with assistance from Prime Minister Andranik Margarian, offered A1-Plus a new, but significantly smaller, office in downtown Yerevan. However, A1-Plus Director Mesrop Movsesian told us June 19 that the company cannot move into this new office as the cadastre (real estate registration agency) has not provided the necessary paperwork, which also means that the building management cannot sign a contract. Movsesian said that, once the contract is signed, A1-Plus will need to renovate the premises and establish electricity and phone connections before it can resume its activities.

¶3. (SBU) Observers such as Yerevan Press Club head Boris Navasardian and opposition Justice Bloc MP Arshak Sadoyan believe the eviction is the latest in a series of political moves against A1-Plus, which has been denied a television frequency in 12 consecutive tenders. Movsesian, however, has refrained from citing political motives as the cause for the eviction and told us that he believes the company's recent problems are economic in nature. He also said that A1-Plus has moved out of all of its offices except one, and that if the company is permitted to remain in this single room, it will be able to maintain its activities until the situation is resolved. Movsesian commented, however, that if the company is forced out of this last room without the government offering a viable alternative, he will do everything possible to defend the company's rights.

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COMMENT  
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14. (SBU) Despite Al-Plus television station's inability to obtain a broadcast frequency, the media outlet remains one of the leading independent news sources in Armenia today. If Al-Plus is driven out of business, this will be another significant black mark on the GOAM's record of protecting freedom of speech in Armenia.

EVANS